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ABSTRACT

Scholars have argued that siblings are ideally suited to provide social support, but there is little research concerning the level of social support provided by siblings, or whether this form of extended-family support is more or less available in minority families. This study examined racial and ethnic differences in sibling relationships for what they can reveal about the strength of the laterally extended family. It reviewed theory and research on the extended family among majority and minority populations, and then used a large national data set to compare an aspect of the extended family--adult sibling relationships--among African-, Hispanic-, Asian-, and non-Hispanic white Americans. Sibling relationships were assessed on four dimensions: coresidence, contact, actual exchange, and potential support. Results provided no consistent evidence that one race/ethnic group has stronger sibling ties than any other. Rather, there seemed to be significant differences across groups in the form that sibling solidarity takes. The strength of the Hispanic- and African American sibship was a greater willingness to take siblings into their home. Asian Americans were distinguished by a greater willingness to call on siblings despite distance, and non-Hispanic whites were distinguished by relatively high levels of actual exchange of social support. (Contains 25 references.) (SD)

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ADULT SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS: RACIAL AND ETHNIC COMPARISONS

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Scholars have argued that siblings are ideally situated to provide social support: Relationships are lifelong, normatively supported, and based on equality of status (Avioli, 1989; Bedford, 1989; Rossi & Rossi, 1990). We have relatively little evidence, however, about the actual level of social support provided by siblings, nor do we know whether this form of extended-family support is more or less available in minority families.

This chapter examines racial and ethnic differences in sibling relationships for what they can tell us about the strength of the laterally extended family as a social support network. We review theory and research on the extended family among majority and minority populations, and then use a large national data set to compare one aspect of the extended family—adult sibling relationships—among African, Hispanic, Asian, and non-Hispanic White Americans. Sibling relationships will be assessed on four dimensions: coresidence, contact, actual exchange, and perceived supportiveness.

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BACKGROUND

In 1943, Parsons provided a model of American kinship in which an inner circle of parents, children, and spouse is contrasted with an outer circle of relatives to whom one has fewer obligations. Parsons (1943) suggested that siblings are part of our inner circle when we are children, but move to the outer circle as we marry and have our own children. Parsons noted that his model was based largely on observations of the American White middle class (during a period, moreover, in which nearly everyone did marry and have their own children), and the generality of the model has yet to be established across socioeconomic and race/ethnic categories. Some observers have argued that the extended family is stronger (and, by implication, the line between inner and outer circle weaker) among African Americans (Stack, 1974). Rossi and Rossi's (1990) study of Bostonions, however, suggests that the pattern of normative obligations is more accurately described as different than stronger: Their African-American respondents reported *greater* distinction between inner circle and siblings, but *less* distinction between siblings and other nonnuclear kin. Very little research has examined Hispanic or Asian-American family structures. The material that follows reviews research findings on sibling relationships by race/ethnicity in the United States.

Race/Ethnicity and Sibling Solidarity

Coresidence. The research literature provides firm demonstration that one type of sibling solidarity—coresidence—is greater for African Americans than non-Hispanic Whites (Angel & Tienda, 1982; Beck & Beck, 1989; Tienda & Angel, 1982). Beck and Beck (1984, 1989) used data from the National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS) to examine the likelihood of *ever* having coresiding kin over a decade-long period. They concluded that middle-aged African Americans were twice as likely as non-Hispanic Whites to have ever had coresiding relatives. When focusing on "other relatives," a category that included siblings, African Americans reported three times greater likelihood of ever having coresident kin (31% vs. 11%). These differences are attributable in part to differences in marital status: For both racial groups, rates of coresidence were highest for those who were continuously or intermittently unmarried.

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That coresidence is a type of social support and is the link among race, marital status, and coresidence is confirmed in other studies. Hofferth (1984) demonstrated that the only indicator of extendedness in which Black parents exceeded Whites significantly was coresidence—and this difference was largely attributable to greater frequency of single-parent families in the Black subsample. Meanwhile, Hofferth reported no racial difference in giving or receiving financial support. Hogan, Hao, and Parish (1990) generally replicated these findings using data on young mothers from the NLS. Once the greater likelihood of young mothers' coresiding with kin was controlled, Black mothers received *less* support than White mothers.

Research including Hispanics as well as Blacks and non-Hispanic Whites confirms the importance of marital status in predicting interaction with extended kin. Chavez (1985) confirmed a greater tendency of U.S. Hispanics to extend laterally, but noted that this tendency is most common among new immigrants and especially among illegal aliens. Tienda and Angel (1982), using data from the 1976 Survey of Income and Education, found that households of Hispanics from Central and South America are most likely to include laterally extended adults, African-American households are next, followed by those of Mexican Americans, and, finally, Puerto Ricans.

We have even less research on extended family relationships among the small and diverse Asian-American population. Focusing on coresidence, Kanjanapan (1989) reported enormous diversity across Asian ethnic groups along with a "consistent and powerful [positive] relationship" (p. 52) between length of stay in this country and likelihood that unmarried adults will live alone.

Other Exchange. Gold (1990) used a small, highly educated older sample from a single Southern community to compare sibling relationships among Blacks and Whites. Her conclusion is that Blacks are more likely than Whites to report close and positive ties with siblings, but that this difference is limited to dyads including at least one male. There was no racial difference in closeness among female dyads.

A small study by Suggs (1989) compares predictors of association with siblings among a small sample of Black and White elders from North Carolina. For both racial groups, she found physical proximity an important determinant of contact with siblings; education was positively associated with contact among Black but not White siblings.

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Taylor, Chatters, and Mays (1988) used the 1980 Panel Study of Income Dynamics to compare Black, Anglo, and Hispanic respondents on sources named as emergency helpers. Figures drawn from a bar chart show that approximately 15% of Hispanic and Anglo respondents, but 24% of Black respondents, named a sibling as their likely source of emergency assistance. Using a different sample, the National Survey of Black Americans, Chatters, Taylor, and Jackson (1986) again found that nearly one-quarter of African Americans would call on a sibling for help if they were sick or disabled. Chatters, Taylor, and Neighbors (1989) concluded "Siblings are frequently mentioned as members of the informal helper network" (p.). Because the latter analyses were based on the National Survey of Black Americans, no race/ethnic comparisons were possible.

Rossi and Rossi (1990) compared a variety of non-Hispanic White ethnic groups and Blacks on normative obligation to kin. Their results show that Black respondents report significantly lower normative obligation to siblings than most White ethnic groups, but significantly higher obligations to distant kin. Whereas most ethnic groups show a sharply declining level of obligation as kinship becomes more remote, Blacks "draw the line on high obligations much further out in the kindred" (p. 240).

Although scholars often assume that the extended family is stronger in Hispanic than Anglo communities, there is little strong research to support this conclusion (Vega, 1990). Williams (1990) summarized her ethnographic research of Texas communities by concluding that many urbanized, Americanized Hispanics had only ritual contacts with extended families, and that "the mutual aid once associated with the extended kinship system is no longer characteristic of everyday life" (p. 138).

The Problem

Our previous research using the National Survey of Families and Households data set (White & Riedmann, 1992a, 1992b) showed the chief factors encouraging sibling solidarity were a relatively small inner circle (unmarried, no adult children, no living parents), having a sister (especially for women), structural availability (larger number of sibs and closer physical distance, full siblings), higher education and income, and younger age. This list includes many of the factors thought to play a part in race/ethnic patterns of family solidarity. Net of these factors, however, we still

found a consistent pattern of race/ethnic differences in sibling solidarity: African Americans have more contact with their sibs, but less actual exchange than do non-Hispanic Whites; Mexican Americans do not differ significantly from non-Hispanic Whites on any dimensions; Asian Americans report significantly greater perceived support from siblings in a hypothetical emergency, but are not significantly different on contact, affection, or actual exchange. Although these measures of solidarity are not exhaustive and structural differences may be incompletely controlled, this research suggests that differences between inner circle, sibship, and respondent characteristics cannot "explain away" race/ethnic effects. An omitted consideration in these analyses is whether cultural differences among race/ethnic groups may prompt individuals to respond differently to similar situations—that is, whether there are interactions by race.

The research reported here extends previous work in several ways. First, it provides descriptive data on race/ethnic differences in sibship characteristics and sibling relationships. Second, it considers coresidence as well as other forms of social exchange. Third, it includes Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and other Hispanics as well as Mexican Americans. Fourth, it includes a measure of immigrant status. Finally, it focuses on additive and interactive paths through which race/ethnicity may affect sibling solidarity.

STUDY DESIGN

Sample

This analysis is based on the National Survey of Families and Households conducted in 1987–88 (Sweet, Bumpass, & Call, 1988). This study includes personal interviews with a national probability sample of 13,017 respondents, representing the noninstitutionalized population of the United States. The response rate was 73.5%. The survey oversampled minority groups, single parents, cohabitors, persons with stepchildren, and the recently married. Because this research benefits from the larger number of minority group members, the sample used in this analysis does not correct for this basis of oversampling. We do, however, use weights to compensate for other bases of oversampling, household size, and differential response rates; the sample has also been weighted to make it match the age and sex composi-

tion of the U.S. sample reported by the Current Population Survey. The analysis reported in this chapter includes all those respondents who had living full, step, or half siblings.

Measurement

Dependent Variables. Sibling relationships are measured on four dimensions: coresidence, contact, actual exchange, and potential support.

Coresidence is a dummy variable indicating that the respondent was living in the same household with at least one sibling (full, step, or half). We added a control for whether the respondent *coresided with a parent*. Respondents coresiding with a sibling were omitted from analyses of all other dependent variables.

Sibling *contact* is the sum of two questions, each having a set of response categories ranging from 1 (no contact) to 6 (more than once a week). The questions were: "During the past 12 months, how often did you see any of your full brothers or sisters?" and "During the past 12 months, how often did you talk on the telephone or receive a letter from any of your full brothers or sisters?" The result was an ordinal-level variable with a range of 2 through 12. For respondents who had no full siblings, comparable questions for step/half siblings were substituted. A control variable marked cases with full siblings.

Actual exchange is a dummy variable that indicates whether the respondent gave to or received from siblings: child care, transportation, home repairs, housework, or advice and emotional support in the last month; gifts or loans of $200 or more in the last two years.[1] The question did not distinguish among full, step, and half siblings.

The extent to which siblings were regarded as a source of *potential support* was measured by a series of three questions

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[1] During preliminary analyses, we experimented with several alternative ways of measuring this exchange: counting the number of dimensions of support received/given, separating receiving and giving support, and separating instrumental from social support. Giving and receiving overlapped so much that regression results were virtually identical. Similarly, the dummy variable worked as effectively as the count variable, which was very highly skewed because most respondents reported only one or two types of exchange. Substantively there was no difference in our conclusions about the role of race/ethnicity when instrumental exchanges were separated from giving advice/support, so the analysis is simplified by including both dimensions in the single indicator of social support.

asking "Who is the one person you would call" if you had an emergency in the middle of the night, needed to borrow $200 in an emergency, or were depressed or confused and needed advice? Approximately 15% of the sample volunteered the answer "siblings" in response to these open-ended questions. We dummied the variable to indicate respondents who listed a sibling in any of the three questions.

Independent Variables. Dummy variables identify Afri-can-, Hispanic-, and Asian-American respondents. Initial analyses separated Hispanics into three origin categories for which NSFH had adequate numbers for analysis (Mexico, Puerto Rico, and other), but subsequent analysis showed that the groups were not significantly different except on the measure of coresidence. To conserve tabular space, the groups are combined for all analyses, and significant differences are pointed out in the discussion of coresidence. Native Americans (n = 49) are excluded entirely.

Control Variables. *Age* is a continous variable. *Gender* is dummied with 1 indicating female and 0 indicating male. *Education* is a continuous variable measuring years completed. *Total family income* includes all family income from both salaries and dividends.[2]

Immigration is measured by dummy variable indicating birth outside the United States.

Proximity is measured by a series of three dummy variables: any within 2 miles, 2 to 25 miles, and from 26 to 300 miles. *Number of siblings* indicates number of living siblings (full, half, and step); *full siblings* is a dummy term marking those respondents with living full siblings. A dummy variable measures whether the sibship includes any *sisters*, and another dummy term, *female/sisters*, identifies the interactive case of women respondents with sisters.

Marital status is a dummy variable identifying those currently married and living with their spouse. *Adult children* is a dummy variable indicating whether respondent has any own children (i.e., not step) over 18, and *young children* indicates children under 18 in respondent's home. Any *parent alive* is a dummy variable.

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[2] Because nearly 25% of respondents did not answer the income question, nonrespondents are coded zero on income and a dummy variable, *income nonresponse*, controls for data absence. The coefficients of this variable are not substantively interpretable and therefore are omitted from the tables.

FINDINGS

The findings section is organized into two parts. We present descriptive data on the various race/ethnic categories, and we examine additive and interactive models of sibling solidarity.

Descriptive Data

Table 5.1 provides descriptive data about the four racial/ethnic categories in this analysis: non-Hispanic Whites, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans. Superscripts on the table report ANOVAs between each pair of race/ethnic categories controlling for respondent's age. In many cases each group is significantly different from each other group.

Fewer than 10% of adults live with their siblings, although this percentage is approximately doubled for African and Hispanic Americans. This is the only variable on which Hispanic groups differ significantly among themselves (not shown). Replicating Angel and Tienda (1982), we found Puerto Ricans are significantly less likely and Mexican Americans and other Hispanics significantly more likely than all ethnic categories, taken together, to coreside (10%, 15%, and 19%, respectively). Contact among siblings is significantly different for each pair of groups, with African Americans reporting the most and Asian Americans the least contact. These scores translate approximately into contact several times a month for African-American siblings but only monthly for Asian Americans.

A substantial minority of Americans from all racial/ethnic groups are involved in exchange relationships with their siblings. Anglo Americans are most likely to exchange with their siblings, followed by African Americans, and trailed by Hispanic and Asian Americans. Feeling that one can rely on sibs in an emergency, however, displays virtually the opposite pattern, with Asian Americans most likely and Anglo Americans least likely to say that a sibling would be their first source of emergency assistance. The findings are generally consistent with an interpretation that racial/ethnic groups may have different forms of sibling solidarity in adulthood: Some score high on coresidence, others on general exchange, and others on subjective solidarity. No group stands out as disadvantaged overall.

Sibship characteristics differ substantially across these

TABLE 5.1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS, MEANS FOR NON-HISPANIC WHITES, AFRICAN AMERICANS, HISPANICS, AND ASIAN AMERICANS WITH FULL OR STEP/HALF SIBLINGS, NSFH, 1987–88, ADJUSTED FOR AGE

	NonHis-Whites (N = 8442)	African Americans (N = 2156)	Hispanics (N = 1009)	Asian Americans (N = 136)
Sibling Solidarity				
Coresidence	.08[a]	.16[b]	.14[b,c]	.06[a,d]
Contact	7.62[a]	8.39[b]	7.84[c]	6.62[d]
Exchange	.43[a]	.38[b]	.33[c]	.35[c,d]
Perceived social support	.28[a]	.33[b]	.33[b,c]	.35[a,b,c,d]
Sibship Characteristics				
Respondent female	.52[a]	.56[b]	.52[a,c]	.59[a,b,c,d]
Any sisters	.80[a]	.88[b]	.87[b,c]	.81[a,d]
Any sibs 0–2 miles	.27[a]	.42[b]	.33[c]	.15[d]
Any sibs 2–25 miles	.39[a]	.42[b]	.35[c]	.22[d]
Any sibs 25–300 miles	.38[a]	.29[b]	.23[c]	.13[d]
Number of living sibs	3.08[a]	4.58[b]	4.91[c]	4.12[b,d]
Any Full sibs	.96[a]	.95[b]	.96[a,b,c]	1.00[d]
Any step/half sibs	.12[a]	.17[b]	.15[b,c]	.10[a,b,c,d]
Inner-circle Characteristics				
Married	.65[a]	.42[b]	.58[c]	.63[a,c,d]
Children > 18	.35[a]	.38[b]	.37[a,b,c]	.26[d]
Children < 18	.37[a]	.40[b]	.43[b,c]	.41[a,b,c,d]
Any living parent	.72[a]	.67[b]	.70[c]	.69[a,b,c,d]
Residing with parent(s)	.12[a]	.18[b]	.14[c]	.06[a,d]
Respondent's Characteristics				
Family income	37,894[a]	23,092[b]	20,516[c]	27,976[d]
Education	12.73[a]	11.45[b]	9.71[c]	13.49[d]
Age	43.32[a]	39.65[b]	37.12[c]	34.11[d]
Immigrated	.03[a]	.04[b]	.51[c]	.73[d]

Note. Means with common superscripts (a, b, c, d,) are *not* significantly different at the $p < .05$ level from other means in that row. Means adjusted for age. Family income is based on those reporting.

racial/ethnic groups. Although some significant difference exists between African and Hispanic Americans, these groups generally share relatively large sibships, close distance to sibs, and a greater likelihood of having stepsibs. Asian Americans are distinguished largely by greater distances from their sibs.

In terms of their inner circles, African Americans are much less likely to be married than members of the other three groups and more likely to reside with a parent, both characteristics are likely to increase relationships with siblings. Hispanic Americans are more likely than African Americans to be mar-

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ried, but share relatively high rates of parental coresidence. Asian Americans are distinctive in their lower likelihood of having adult children or coresiding with parents.

Socioeconomic differences are in the directions expected. The relatively low mean income of Asian Americans (especially compared to their educational mean) is probably attributable to the very high percentage of Asian Americans in this sample who are immigrants (73%). Approximately half of the Hispanics in this sample are immigrants, a factor that undoubtedly plays a role in their low education and income. In the results to follow, we will examine whether immigrant status—our most direct measure of cultural differences—also plays a role in sibling relations.

Regression Results: Additive and Interactive Models

Having established significant race/ethnic differences in sibling relationships, we turn to regression analysis to examine the sources of these differences. Using OLS or logistic regression, depending on the form of the dependent variable, both an additive and an interactive model are examined. The additive analyses add the control variables in a stepwise fashion to examine the extent to which race/ethnic differences are explained by controls for sibship, inner circle, and respondent characteristics. The last step is to consider multiplicative effects. Because theory is so ad hoc in this area, we did not find it a useful guide to eliminate any possible interactions. As a result, we assumed that any race/ethnic category could interact with any of the background variables. This required testing 45 interaction effects for each dependent variable (3 race/ethnic groups $\times$ 15 background variables). The results reported in column 5 of each table include all effects that were significant. Results are discussed for each sibling relationship measure separately.

Coresidence

Table 5.2 presents the logistic regression results when sibling coresidence is the dependent variable. A comparison of race/ethnic dummies across steps 1–4 demonstrates that even after all background characteristics (including likelihood of residing with parents) are controlled, African and Hispanic Americans are more likely than Anglo Americans to reside with sibs.

Asian Americans, however, are not significantly different from non-Hispanic Whites on this variable.

Comparing step 4 with step 1, control for distance and inner-circle characteristics (particularly marital status and residing with parents) explains approximately three-quarters of the greater propensity of African Americans to reside with siblings. Tests for interaction showed that only 1 of 15 background variables (a proportion very little greater than chance) had a significantly different effect for African Americans than for others: A larger number of siblings was associated with reduced coresidence for African Americans but higher coresidence for all others.

Hispanics are also more likely to reside with sibs than are non-Hispanic Whites, but the effect of control variables is different than for African Americans: Control for inner-circle characteristics *raises* the coefficient for Hispanics. As the interaction in step 5 demonstrates, being married increases the likelihood of sib coresidence for Hispanics, whereas it decreases it for others. Among Hispanics, it appears that sibship coresidence is part of a strategy of household extension that involves adding collateral members to established husband–wife families rather than an alternative to nuclear families. Because age decreases likelihood of sibling coresidence more for Hispanics than for others, however, it seems likely that this is a strategy of young families and young adults—a finding that accords with Chavez's (1985) observation that sibling coresidence is characteristic of new or illegal immigrants.

Only 3 of 45 interaction effects were statistically significant, suggesting that in general the same factors predict sibling coresidence across all race/ethnic groups: Women and those with sisters, those who reside with parents, and immigrants are more likely to live with siblings, whereas those who have their own children (under or over 18) or living parents are less likely to coreside with siblings. The social class variables have weak effects on this dependent variable, although family income has a modest positive effect when interaction effects are included.

Contact with Siblings

Confining the analysis to respondents without coresiding sibs, we turn to an OLS analysis of contact with siblings. We found that Hispanics, especially African Americans, see significantly more of their siblings than do non-Hispanic Whites;

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TABLE 5.2 SIBLING CORESIDENCE, NSFH SAMPLE (LOGISTIC REGRESSION), N = 11,687

	Step 1 Race/Ethnic Chars.		Step 2 Sibling Chars.		Step 3 Inner Circle Chars.		Step 4 Respondent's Chars.		Step 5 Interactive Effects	
	b.	S.E.	b.	S.E.	b.	S.E.	b.	S.E.	b.	S.E.
African American	.897***	.078	.674***	.094	.320**	.119	.248*	.123	.662**	.206
Hispanic	.685***	.103	.686***	.125	.856***	.151	.499**	.182	1.356**	.433
Asian American	−.075	.302	.418	.347	.734	.441	.606	.476	.683	.474
Age	−.126***	.005	−.103**	.005	−.036***	.006	−.033***	.006	−.031***	.006
X Hispanic									−.045**	.014
Sibship Characteristics										
R females			−.174	.185	.579*	.235	.625**	.239	.592*	.241
Sisters			.211	.145	.398*	.184	.417*	.187	.396*	.190
F with sisters			−.369	.204	−.506*	.257	−.549*	.262	−.518*	.263
Any < 2 miles			2.999***	.105	2.798***	.116	2.823***	.122	2.808***	.122
Any 2–25 miles			−.431***	.086	−.497	.107	−.460***	.110	−.476***	.110
Any 26–300 miles			−.445***	.097	−.563***	.120	−.567***	.125	−.577***	.125
Number sibs			−.003	.017	.134***	.020	.127***	.021	.164***	.026
X Af Am									−.106**	.040
Any fulls			.142	.217	−.350	.263	−.431	.270	−.436	.272
Inner Circle Chars.										
Married					−1.433***	.147	−1.317***	.155	−1.734***	.187
X Hispanic									1.536***	.327
Children > 18					−1.270***	.211	−1.287***	.214	−1.207***	.215
Children < 18					−.52***	.137	−.741***	.143	−.770***	.146
Parents alive					−.964***	.182	−.815***	.192	−.854***	.196
Reside w/parent					2.565***	.117	1.845***	.134	1.835***	.135
Respondent's Chars.										
Total family income (000s)							.0004	.002	.005*	.002
Education							−.042	.022	−.043	.022
Immigrated							.440*	.197	.377	.198
−2 log likelihood ratio	5768.13		4283.84		2945.68		2797.60		2761.57	
Constant	1.573		−.710		−2.321		−2.801		−2.819	
df	4		12		17		21		24	

Note. Beginning −2 log likelihood ratio is 7550.09.
*$p < .01$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .001$.

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Asian Americans see substantially and significantly less. Not only the level, but also the determinants, of contact differ significantly by race/ethnic group.

Comparing steps 1 through 4 of Table 5.3 shows that more than half of the greater propensity of African Americans to contact their siblings is explained by sibship characteristics, particularly closer distance and a larger number of full sibs. Six of 15 interaction effects were statistically significant for African Americans, suggesting that sibling contact has somewhat different predictors than for the other groups: African-American contact with siblings is not as strongly affected by distance, neither young children nor a spouse decrease sibling contact for African Americans, living parents increase contact for African Americans only, and immigration actually increases African-American contact with siblings.

The modest but significant effect of Hispanic ethnicity on sibling contact is largely explained by sibling characteristics. After these are controlled, there is no difference between Hispanic and non-Hispanic Whites. Only one interaction effect is significant for Hispanics: Number of siblings increases contact more for Hispanics than for other groups.

The strikingly lower likelihood that Asian Americans will be in contact with their siblings appears to be due largely to sibship characteristics, particularly distance. Two interaction effects demonstrate that living in close proximity increases contact more for Asians than for others. The jump in the main effect for Asians in column 5 demonstrates the effect of Asian ethnicity when distance is greater than 300 miles (i.e., when the distance interactions are zero). For the 73% of Asian respondents who are migrants, this distance is likely to be 6,000 miles rather than 500 miles, and it is not surprising that they have lower contact with their siblings.

Exchange of Social Support

In contrast with the evidence on coresidence and contact, Table 5.4 shows that African and Hispanic Americans are *less* likely than non-Hispanic Whites to exchange social or instrumental support with their siblings. Asian Americans are not significantly different from non-Hispanic Whites on this dimension, although we do find (step 5) that Asian Americans who live a medium distance (2–25 miles) from their siblings are

*p < .01. **p < .05. ***p < .001.

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TABLE 5.3 CONTACT AMONG ADULT SIBLINGS, NSFH SAMPLE (OLS), *N* = 10,729.

	Step 1 Race/Ethnic Chars.		Step 2 Sibling Chars.		Step 3 Inner Circle Chars.		Step 4 Respondent's Chars.		Step 5 Interactive Effects	
	b.	S.E.	b.	S.E.	b.	S.E.	b.	S.E.	b.	S.E.
African American	.840***	.071	.390***	.063	.377***	.064	.384***	.064	.057	.140
Hispanic	.256**	.099	.085	.086	.086	.086	.196	.098	.557	.407
Asian American	-1.139***	.249	-.521*	.210	-.544**	.210	-.451*	.220	-.904***	.260
Age	-.034***	.002	-.027***	.001	-.023***	.002	-.022***	.002	-.022***	.002
Sibship Characteristics										
R female			.003	.108	.037	.109	.048	.109	.052	.108
Sisters			.059	.089	.070	.088	.080	.088	.094	.088
F with sisters			.704***	.119	.687***	.119	.677***	.119	.678***	.119
Any < 2 miles			2.517***	.052	2.501***	.052	2.501***	.052	2.569***	.059
X Af Am									-.340**	.126
Any 2–25 miles			1.846***	.047	1.857***	.047	1.863***	.047	1.848***	.047
X Asian									1.701***	.498
Any 26–300 miles			.196***	.048	.204***	.048	.194***	.048	.264***	.052
X Af Am									-.465***	.130
X Asian									1.603*	.630
Number sibs			.009	.010	.016	.010	.022*	.010	.017	.010
Any fulls			.703***	.116	.689***	.116	.666***	.116	.615***	.121
X Hispanic									.854*	.411
Inner Circle Chars.										
Married					-.121*	.953	-.127*	.054	-.203***	.060
X Af Am									.377**	.126
Children > 18					-.215**	.067	-.211**	.067	-.207**	.067
Children < 18					-.200***	.056	-.188***	.056	-.230***	.062
X Af Am									.343**	.130
Parent alive					.075	.063	.063	.069	.009	.074
X Af Am									.307*	.135
Respondent's Chars.										
Total family income (000s)							.001	.0007	.001	.0007
Education							.016	.009	.017	.009
Immigrated							-.150	.097	-.269*	.105
X Af Am									.877**	.268
R^2	.06		.33		.34		.34		.34	
Constant	8.952		6.205		6.187		5.871		6.015	
df	4		12		16		20		29	

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

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*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

TABLE 5.4 EXCHANGE AMONG ADULT SIBLINGS, NSFH SAMPLE (LOGISTIC REGRESSION), N = 11,142.

	Step 1 Race/Ethnic Chars.		Step 2 Sibling Chars.		Step 3 Inner Circle Chars.		Step 4 Respondent's Chars.		Step 5 Interactive Effects	
	b.	S.E.	b.	S.E.	b.	S.E.	b.	S.E.	b.	S.E.
African American	-.194***	.055	-.353***	.059	-.351***	.061	-.269***	.062	-.759***	.200
Hispanic	-.446***	.077	-.539***	.081	-.544***	.082	-.126	.095	.145	.158
Asian American	-.229	.185	-.087	.189	-.119	.189	-.009	.203	-.221	.220
Age	-.041***	.001	-.042***	.001	-.026***	.002	-.026***	.002	-.028***	.002
X Af Am									.014***	.004
Sibship Chars.										
R female			.038	.102	.052	.102	.100	.103	.122	.104
X Hispanic									-.548***	.164
Sisters			.181*	.083	.190*	.083	.224**	.084	.197*	.084
F with sisters			.288*	.112	.281*	.112	.263*	.113	.302**	.114
Any < 2 miles			.583***	.048	.599***	.048	.725***	.050	.732***	.050
Any 2–25 miles			.396***	.043	.400***	.044	.473***	.045	.472***	.045
Any 26–300 miles			.244***	.045	.250***	.045	.207***	.046	.197***	.046
X Asian									1.524*	.698
Number sibs			.024**	.009	.028	.009	.052***	.010	.070***	.112
X Af Am									-.049*	.202
Any fulls			.419***	.112	.407***	.112	.325**	.113	.325**	.113
Inner Circle Chars.										
Married					-.045	.050	-.193***	.053	-.220***	.053
Children > 18					-.427***	.064	-.335	.066	-.336***	.066
Children < 18					.113*	.051	.057	.052	.107*	.054
X Hispanic									-.429**	.166
Parent alive					.307***	.065	.174**	.067	.171*	.067
Respondent's Char.										
Total family income (000s)							.004***	.0007	.003***	.0007
X Af Am									.008**	.005
X Hispanic									.013	.004
Education							.011**	.009	.113***	.009
Immigrated							-.273**	.097	-.288**	.098
-2 log likelihood ratio	13553.299		13097.18		13015.56		12694.79		12633.72	
Constant	1.402		.272		-.517		.896		-1.892	
df	4		12		16		20		27	

Note. Beginning -2 log likelihood ratio is 14589.55.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

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more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to exchange with their siblings.

A comparison of steps 1 through 4 suggests that African and Hispanic Americans exchange less with their siblings *despite*, rather than because of, sibship characteristics. That is, when sibling characteristics that encourage exchange (having sisters, being a female with sisters, having full siblings, and close proximity) are controlled, the negative effect of African-American or Hispanic identification actually becomes larger. Three variables had significantly different effects for African Americans than for others: the lower exchange associated with age was less sharp for African-American siblings, the number of siblings had a less positive effect, and family income had a significantly stronger impact for African Americans than for other groups. When these interaction effects are in the equation (column 5), the negative coefficient for African Americans jumps strikingly. This main effect when the interaction terms are zero (i.e., when age and income are zero) demonstrates that the negative effect of African-American racial identification on sibling exchange is greatest among those who are young and poor. This is consistent with Taylor's findings regarding the relative isolation from family support among the lowest income groups of Black Americans.

Three of 15 interaction effects are also significant for Hispanics: Among Hispanics only, exchange is *lower* among women than men and among those with young children. Although the effect is much smaller for Hispanics than for African Americans, family income has a significantly stronger positive effect on Hispanic exchange with siblings than on that of non-Hispanic Whites.

Perceived Supportiveness

When we turn to subjective supportiveness as opposed to actual exchange (Table 5.5), we find that African and Hispanic Americans are significantly more likely to specify a sibling as a first source of emergency assistance. These significant effects are virtually eliminated by a control for sibship characteristics, suggesting that factors of distance, gender, number, and full status explain the race/ethnicity effects. Asian Americans also report greater reliance on sibs than do non-Hispanic Whites, but in this case differences grow rather than decrease when sibship characteristics are controlled.

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TABLE 5.5 PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT FROM ADULT SIBLINGS, NFSH SAMPLE (LOGISTIC REGRESSION), N = 11,142.

	Step 1 Race/Ethnic Chars.		Step 2 Sibling Chars.		Step 3 Inner Circle Chars.		Step 4 Respondent's Chars.		Step 5 Interactive Effects	
	b.	S.E.	b.	S.E.	b.	S.E.	b.	S.E.	b.	S.E.
African American	.273***	.055	.014	.060	−.011	.061	.027	.062	−.618***	.177
Hispanic	.287***	.076	.085	.081	.072	.082	.166	.095	.158	.134
Asian American	.398*	.186	.512**	.193	.498*	.193	.407*	.205	−.071	.268
Age	−.009***	.001	−.007***	.001	−.006*	.002	−.005*	.002	−.006**	.002
X Af Am									−2.598***	.242
Sibship Chars.										
R female			−.628***	.116	−.634***	.117	−.616***	.117	−.617***	.118
Sisters			.125	.087	−.128	.087	−.117	.087	−.122	.088
F with sisters			.690***	.126	.687***	.126	.679***	.127	.693***	.127
Any < 2 miles			.693***	.048	.688***	.048	.728***	.049	.772***	.052
X Hispanic									−.416*	.163
Any 2–25 miles			.569***	.045	.571***	.045	.604***	.046	.600***	.046
X Asian									1.193*	.486
Any 26–300 miles			.161***	.047	.164***	.047	.156***	.048	.160***	.048
Number sibs			.099***	.009	.099***	.009	.109***	.010	.111***	.010
Any fulls			.916***	.148	.913***	.148	.882***	.148	.878***	.148
Inner Circle Chars.										
Married					−.065	.052	−.111*	.054	−.138*	.054
Children > 18					−.238***	.067	−.212**	.067	−.227***	.067
X Asian									1.305*	.614
Children < 18					.129*	.055	.120*	.055	.130*	.056
Parent alive					−.255***	.068	−.296***	.069	.305***	.069
Respondent's Chars.										
Total family income (000s)							.003***	.0006	.002**	.0007
X Af Am									.013***	.003
X Hispanic									.009*	.004
Education							.041***	.009	.040***	.009
Immigrated							.063	.097	.071	.097
−2 log likelihood ratio	12936.02		12179.94		12144.80		12066.36		12019.43	
Constant	−.609		−2.235		−2.035		−2.688		−2.598	
df	4		12		16		20		26	

Note. Beginning −2 log likelihood ratio is 13025.40.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Only a handful of significant interactions were found, but the effect of these interactions on the main effect for African Americans is striking. The positive effects of family income are stronger for African Americans, as are the negative effects of older age. When these two interaction effects are controlled (column 5), the previously positive main effect for African Americans becomes significant and negative. This turnaround suggests once again that it is the young and poor who are particularly disadvantaged.

The positive impact of income on sibling reliance is approximately 3 times greater for Hispanics than for other groups, but Hispanic reliance on siblings is less likely to be increased by very close proximity. Asian-American reliance on siblings is more likely to be positively affected by moderate proximity. Whereas the rest of the sample reports less reliance on siblings when they have adult children, Asian Americans report more. Among a population in which three-quarters are immigrants, it is possible that these respondents find their siblings to be more comfortable confidantes than they find their probably more Americanized children to be.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have explored the differences in sibling relationships across four race/ethnic groups: non-Hispanic Whites, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans. Rather than summarize these complex findings in detail, we consider two issues: Is this aspect of the extended family stronger in minority families? Are the differences we observe due to culture or circumstance?

Stronger Minority Extended Families?

Results indicate a complex picture in which there are many significant differences, but no group has consistently stronger or weaker ties across the variety of measures of sibling relationships examined here. As the qualitative literature on strengths of the minority family suggests, initial results for African and Hispanic Americans showed stronger ties on three of four dimensions: They are more likely to reside with their

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siblings, to have contact with them, and to perceive them as sources of emergency support. These positive effects appear to be largely due to sibship characteristics favorable to sibling ties, specifically larger sibships and closer distances.

Against this generally positive picture must be placed the negative coefficients for actual exchange and, in particular, the finding that it is the poorest and, among African Americans, the youngest who are most likely to be left out of both objective and subjective sibling exchange relationships. From this complex evidence, we conclude that this part of the African- and Hispanic-American extended family is not clearly stronger, and may even be weaker, than that of non-Hispanic Whites. Similar to findings in earlier studies using other definitions of extended family support (Hofferth, 1984; Hogan et al., 1990; Tienda & Angel 1982), we find that the only clear evidence of greater supportiveness comes from greater likelihood of coresidence.

One might be tempted to conclude that minority individuals, who are disproportionately disadvantaged, share what they have, including their homes. The measures of actual and subjective exchange used in this analysis, however, are, if anything, even less demanding on economic resources than is coresidence. The measures are dominated by questions about advice, child care, or other low-cost services. Preliminary analysis (not shown) showed no substantive differences in effects when exchange was separated into economic versus purely social kinds of support. We are thus inclined to attribute the greater likelihood of coresidence to cultural differences that place less importance on the privacy or boundedness of the nuclear family.

Cultural Differences or Social Class?

Competing explanations of need versus culture have been brought forward previously to explain the greater cohesiveness (and especially coresidence) of minority families. Turned on its head, we can also ask about the role of culture versus low income in explaining the reduced likelihood of exchange among African and Hispanic Americans.

For measures of objective and subjective exchange with siblings, our findings show that social class makes more of a difference among African and Hispanic Americans than it does among non-Hispanic Whites. This finding reinforces an argument that Wilson (1987) and Taylor (1990) have made: Rather

than being universally characterized by disadvantage, minority communities are marked by very strong social class effects. On the variables analyzed here, class appears to have more effect among African- and Hispanic-American communities than among non-Hispanic Whites. This may be a threshold effect (disadvantaged minorities are more disadvantaged than are disadvantaged non-Hispanic Whites). It certainly augers against any assumption that there is a monolithic African-American or Hispanic culture that supports extended family relationships.

The most direct measure of culture in these analyses is the indicator of immigrant status for Hispanic and Asian Americans. Generally, the results do not suggest that culture has a strong or consistent effect independent of structural factors such as distance and education. Except for the measure of coresidence and among African-American immigrants, contact, the main effect of immigrant status, appears to be negative.

Overall, we tested 60 interaction effects for each race/ethnic group (15 control × 4 dependent variables): 12 were significant for African Americans, 7 for Hispanics, and 4 for Asians. These findings suggest that a claim for cultural differences in the predictors or form of sibling relationships are strongest in the case of African Americans and weakest in the case of Asians.

The strongest evidence of cultural differences, however, is in the forms of sibling relationships rather than in the predictors. Clearly, coresidence is a more likely form of sibling aid among African and Hispanic Americans than among Asian Americans and non-Hispanic Whites. Whatever may be the differences in *family* extension, *household* extension is more likely among African and Hispanic Americans.

Conclusion

Based on this analysis of four dimensions of adult sibling relationships across four racial/ethnic groups, we conclude that the similarities far outweigh the differences. The majority of race/ethnic differences noted are explained by variables that generally work in the same way for people of different races/ethnicities: those with large sibships, with nearby sibs, without spouses or unmarried children, and with higher family incomes have stronger sibling relationships. Although there are some exceptions, the distinction between inner and outer circle seems to operate very similarly for all groups.

There is no consistent evidence here that one race/ethnic group has *stronger* sibling ties than any other, or that any group is categorized by weakness or a "broken" family. Rather, there seem to be significant differences across groups in the form that sibling solidarity takes. The strength of the Hispanic and African-American sibship is a greater willingess to take siblings into one's home; Asian Americans are distinguished by a greater willingness to call on siblings despite distance. Non-Hispanic Whites are distinguished by relatively high levels of actual exchange of social support. Overall, the evidence here is of surprisingly strong sibling relationships despite, or perhaps because of, much-discussed declines in the nuclear family.

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